

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 00742 151928Z
ACTION SS-25

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O P 151521Z MAR 78
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AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0742

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV, RH
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: APPROACH TO FRONT LINE PRESIDENTS

REF: STATE 063495

1. UK HICOM TURNER AND I WERE RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT KHAMA
ON MARCH 14. I CONVEYED TALKING POINTS ON RESULTS OF SEC-
RETARY'S MEETING MARCH 11 WITH NKOMO AND MUGABE (REFTEL)
AFTER WHICH TURNER COMMENTED THAT OWEN MEETING MARCH 13
WITH PF REPRESENTATIVES HAD APPARENTLY BEEN A REPEAT.

2. PRESIDENT KHAMA, WHO HAD ON HIS SIDE CABINET SECRETARY
STEENKAMP, PRIVATE SECRETARY LEGWAILA AND MINEXTAFF PERMSEC
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MPOTOKWANE, COMMENTED FIRST BY SAYING: "IT'S ALL VERY
DISAPPOINTING, ISN'T IT?" WHEN NO ONE DISAGREED, KHAMA
ADDED THAT HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAD FRANKLY NOT BEEN
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR AN ALL-PARTIES CONFER-
ENCE. HOWEVER REGRETTABLE AND UNPROMISING THE SITUATION
AS RESULT OF PF ATTITUDE, KHAMA SAID HE WOULD "TRY TO
GET TO THE PARTIES" TO IMPRESS UPON THEM THE IMPORTANCE

OF CONFERENCE.

3. LEGWAILA SPOKE OF THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN COMMUNICATING WITH PF, ADDING THAT THE GOB OFTEN DOES NOT KNOW WHERE NKOMO AND MUGABE ARE. KHAMA MADE SELF-DEPRECATING COMMENT ABOUT INCREASING INABILITY TO GET NKOMO AND MUGABE TO LISTEN. THIS LED TO GENERAL DISCUSSION OF GOB'S LEVERAGE ON PF WHICH, IT WAS CONCLUDED, WAS LIMITED PRIMARILY BECAUSE GOB CANNOT, FOR VARIETY OF REASONS, REFUSE TO ADMIT NKOMO PEOPLE WHO, UPON ARRIVING IN BOTSWANA, BECOME REFUGEES.

4. KHAMA THEN ASKED WHAT MAKES PF AND MUZOREWA/SITHOLE EACH THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITHOUT EVEN DISCUSSING OR COMPROMISING WITH THE OTHER? WE REVIEWED MUZOREWA'S "MELT AWAY" THEORY RE PF FORCES AND PF'S CONFIDENCE IN AFRICAN, NON-ALIGNED AND COMMUNIST SUPPORT AS PROBABLY SUSTAINING NKOMO AND MUGABE. THERE FOLLOWED A REVIEW OF ETHNIC AND TRIBAL AFFINITIES OF THE VARIOUS NATIONALISTS, THE CONCLUSION OF WHICH WAS THAT NKOMO IS INTRANSIGENT MAY RELATE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT HE FEELS ISOLATED AND DESPERATE WITH NEITHER FRIENDS NOR FELLOW MATABELE AMONG THE SALISBURY GROUP.

5. LATER SAME EVENING, GOB OFFICIALS PRESENT AT ABOVE MEETING REFLECTED CONSIDERABLE DISPLEASURE AT CONFIDENTIAL

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BBC REPORTS OF CONTINUED PF INFLEXIBILITY IN SECOND ROUND OF OWEN-PF TALKS.

6. COMMENT: GOB OFFICIALS ARE FRUSTRATED BUT, AS KHAMA NOTED IN THE MEETING, "NOT SURPRISED" BY THE PRESENT IMPASSE. WE HEAR ECHOES OF AN IMPENDING FL MEETING BUT NO JOY AT PROSPECTS OF WHAT MAY EMERGE FROM IT.
NORLAND

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